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ABSTRACT

Designed for university educators, a 34-item checklist for improving the quality of student internships and field experiences is provided. The content of the checklist is based upon comprehensive evaluation results gathered from post-internship students, agency personnel, and university staff. Topics on planning for seminar experiences and field supervision include: (1) the items to be included in a written course outline for students; (2) steps to take early in a course; (3) obtaining feedback on course progress before the middle of a course; (4) techniques to keep in mind throughout a course; (5) tips for planning field supervision; (6) the supervisor's role in visiting interns; and (7) successful techniques for judging the work of an intern. The checklist is general enough to be used in a variety of preparatory programs as well as in the teaching professions. (LH)

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A CHECKLIST FOR UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS REGARDING THE OPERATION OF SUCCESSFUL INTERN SEMINARS AND FIELD EXPERIENCES

Preparation in most professions includes some kind of field experience and/or internship. In too many instances, however, these vital opportunities for trainees suffer from inadequate monitoring and supervision. Such shortcomings have been found in preparatory programs in medicine and law as well as in the teaching professions.

Our experience at Northeastern has shown us once again that field experiences are essential for allowing trainees to apply the concepts they have learned. Evaluation results have demonstrated, however, that the internship experience was not always an adequate one or as successful as it could have been.

In an effort to improve the quality of the internships, we have developed a checklist which can be used as a guide by university personnel. The content of this chekclist is based on comprehensive evaluation results gathered from post-internship students, agency personnel, and university staff.

We believe this guide can be utilized by supervisors to insure that the internship is a rich and meaningful experience for the trainee. In fact, a conscientious supervisor could certainly use the checklist as a means of evaluating his or her own performance during the internship and after it is completed.

We hope that you will find this product of our evaluation efforts as helpful as we have found it to be.

Stephen D. Lapan

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DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELOR EDUCATION

A CHECKLIST FOR UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS REGARDING THE OPERATION OF SUCCESSFUL INTERN SEMINARS AND FIELD EXPERIENCES

I. THE SEMINAR

A. In planning the seminar experience, be sure you have developed a written course outline for the students that includes:

____1. Topics for which you are responsible.

____2. Topics to be covered by visiting persons.

____3. Time allotment for sharing field experience.

____4. Clear explanation of course requirements.

____5. Clear explanation of how grade will be determined.

B. Early in the progress of the course, be sure to firm-up the course design by:

____1. Encouraging students to give you assignment topics to cover during class.

____2. Holding short discussions about the issues that will be covered in subsequent classes.

____3. Requesting students to explain to you what they think the course requirements mean.

C. Before the middle of the course, be certain that you have:

___1. Completely firmed-up all topics to be covered, when and by whom.

___2. Requested that the students complete, anonymously, a feedback report about how the course is progressing. (Include things they like, don't like, and anything they want to do before the course ends. Leave the room while they do this, asking one of the students to collect the report and place it on your desk. And emphasize, NO NAMES.)

___3. Type up and duplicate the feedback and spend up to one-half of a session going over needed changes with the class members. (Remember, this is the time when feedback is useful. Waiting until the end of the course does these students no good.)

D. All during the course, keep in mind that:

___1. Any requirements for the course must be evaluated and returned to the students so they have time to improve their weaknesses.

___2. If grading is determined by combining the seminar and field experience performance, students must be told how this is done.

___3. Discussions of field expereinces often are dominated by a few students and become redundant. Limit these sharings to the first 20 - 30 minutes of class, or the students will see the course as time wasting and useless.

___4. Don't make assignments or provide handouts unless they will be explained or discussed in class.

___5. Encourage students to discuss what they have learned from the field experience or review what they feel they need as a result of the experience.

___6. Take responsibility only for those topics you are capable of presenting. Give the remaining topics to outsiders or leave them out of the course.

___7. Ask students often, "How is it going? Is there some reason I should come out and see you within the next week?"

___8. Do not make assignments too heavy and be sure they are practical and relevant to the purpose of the internship experience.

II. FIELD SUPERVISION

A. Plan your visits in four ways:

___1. Get out as early as possible to let everyone know who you are and to see if roles and expectations are clear.

___2. Visit during the middle three weeks of the internship to monitor the progress of the intern.

___3. Ask interns in seminar if there is a special reason to visit, and if so, then do so.

___4. Visit again with at least 2-3 weeks left just in case some help is needed.

B. In the process of visiting the intern, remember that your role is to:

___1. Make certain early that the agency person, the intern, and you agree about the purpose of the internship.

___2. Later on, find out from the agency person how the intern is doing just in case he/she does not feel comfortable sharing it with the intern.

___3. Be sure to share feedback with the intern early enough so that there is time for adjustments to be made.

___4. Find out from the intern if there is anything he/she wants the agency person to know, but is afraid to talk with directly. (You are the liaison here).

___5. Visit each intern no fewer than three times and preferably four times, and be sure to keep progress folders on each one so that you have standards for subsequent observations.

___6. Let everyone know as soon as possible if there are problems. Don't be afraid of aborting placements that just won't work.

C. When judging the work of the intern, be sure to:

___1. Share your impressions with the intern and the agency person, and see if they can help you adjust your assessment.

___2. Be as objective as you can in making assessments. Label reports for what they are: observation, descriptions, perceptions, speculations.

____3. Emphasize positive feedback first, then attack problems.

____4. Provide the intern with a record of your evaluation, or at least make sure he/she has recorded it.

____5. When determining what role you will play to serve the best interest of the agency and the intern, try to put yourself in their place. This "mental role reversal" can positively influence how you work with everyone involved.